

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13

ACDA-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /077 W

----- 071821

P R 120155Z NOV 76

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3536

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 16819

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: JA, US, KS, PFOR

SUBJECT: INDICATIONS OF JAPANESE UNEASINESS OVER FUTURE COURSE
OF US-ROK RELATIONS

1. TOKYO PRESS HAS GIVEN UNUSUALLY PROMINENT PLAY TO AMBASSADOR TOGO'S SPEECH IN MINNEAPOLIS IN WHICH HE STRESSED GOJ DESIRE THAT US MAINTAIN TROOP PRESENCE IN SOUTH KOREA. IN MARKED CONTRAST WITH USUAL TREATMENT OF JAPANESE AMBASSADORIAL SPEECHES IN US, WHICH GENERALLY SINK WITHOUT RIPPLES IN JAPANESE MEDIA, TOGO SPEECH RECEIVED FRONT-PAGE HEADLINES IN ALL MAJOR TOKYO NEWSPAPERS. YOMIURI EVEN MOVED STORY OF EMPEROR'S 50TH YEAR OF REIGN CEREMONY TO SECONDARY POSITION TO MAKE TOGO SPEECH LEAD STORY UNDER HEADLINE "JAPAN WANTS US TO KEEP TROOPS IN SOUTH KOREA: TOGO."

2. IN ADDITION TO TOGO'S SPEECH IN MINNEAPOLIS, THIS THEME HAS BEEN REITERATED DURING PAST WEEK IN:

--COMMENTS BY JDA VICE MINISTER MARUYAMA TO JAPANESE PRESS,

--ASAHI ARTICLE WRITTEN BY FORMER JDA DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL KUBO,

--YOMIURI INTERVIEW WITH JAPAN'S AMBASSADOR TO ROK NISHIYAMA,

--FONOFF SPOKESMAN'S DESCRIPTION OF SENIOR LEVEL MEETING AT FONOFF ON NOVEMBER 9 ON KOREAN MATTERS.

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3. FIRST NORTHEAST ASIA DIVDIR ENDO COMMENTED TO EMBOFF THAT TOGO SPEECH WAS TOGO'S OWN AND WRITTEN WITHOUT SPECIFIC AUTHORIZATION OR CLEARANCE FROM TOKYO. HE ADDED FONOFF HAD NO PROBLEMS WITH THE SUBSTANCE WHATSOEVER. FONOFF HAS TASKED ENDO WITH PREPARATION OF POSITION PAPER ON GOJ ATTITUDES ON US POLICY IN KOREA. HE GUESSED CONCLUSION WOULD BE BRIEF--PERHAPS ONE WORD: "STAY." --BUT UPDATED RATIONALE AND AUGMENTATION REQUIRED. ENDO ADDED HE WAS PLANNING TRIP TO WASHINGTON IN EARLY JANUARY.

4. COMMENT: TOGO'S SPEECH AND HEAVY PRESS TREATMENT WITHIN JAPAN EVIDENCE INCREASED CONCERN AMONG JAPANESE OFFICIALS AND POLITICAL COMMENTATORS OVER FUTURE COURSE OF US-ROK RELATIONS. IMPENDING CHANGE OF US ADMINISTRATION COUPLED WITH POSSIBLE DETERIORATION OF ROK PUBLIC IMAGE WITHIN US, DUE TO CONGRESSIONAL BRIBERY SCANDAL, HAVE GENERATED SOME UNCERTAINTY AND UNEASE. THUS FAR THIS UNCERTAINTY HAS NOT EXTENDED TO QUESTIONING OF BASIC US COMMITMENT TO DEFEND SOUTH KOREA. NEVERTHELESS, OBSERVERS IN TOKYO BELIEVE THAT WASHINGTON AND SEOUL MAY BE ENTERING PERIOD OF RELATIVELY STRAINED RELATIONS AND APPEAR TO BE WORRIED OVER POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR JAPAN. END COMMENT.
HODGSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, TROOP DEPLOYMENT, AMBASSADORS, SPEECHES, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 NOV 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TOKYO16819
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760421-0573
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761152/aaaabsri.tel
Line Count: 86
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 MAY 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <27 SEP 2004 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INDICATIONS OF JAPANESE UNEASINESS OVER FUTURE COURSE OF US-ROK RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, JA, US, KS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006